

Carbohydrate loading before surgery

To be issued on admission or the night before the planned surgery.

This is general advice only – specific surgical procedures such as gastrointestinal or head and neck surgery may require individualised guidance. If you have diabetes, your dietitian, doctor or ward nurse will give you personal advice.

When you have surgery, your body may start to break down its fat and muscle stores. This can make you feel weak and tired and affect how quickly you can get back to your normal daily activities. Therefore, it is important to provide your body with the right fuel to help you recover and get back to normal.

Carbohydrate loading

Having food and drink high in carbohydrate or 'carbohydrate loading', before your surgery, can improve how you feel and promote a speedy recovery.

What should I eat and drink before my surgery?

You will not be able to eat or drink in the 6 hours before your surgery.

To help your body recover more quickly it is important to have food and drink high in starchy carbohydrate the night before your surgery. Starchy foods include bread, pasta, potatoes, rice and chapattis. Try fish with vegetables and potatoes, a vegetable curry with rice and naan or chapatti, or some pasta with a meat or vegetable sauce.

On the ward, before your surgery, your healthcare team will give you a clear special high-carbohydrate to drink. Your ward nurse or dietitian will advise you on the specific drink you will be given, and when and how to drink it. These high-carbohydrate drinks will help keep your blood glucose stable and have been shown to speed up recovery.

Contact information:

Dietitian

Nurse

This information is based on information originally developed by NHS Borders. It has been reviewed and updated for Nutrition and Diet Resources UK (NDR-UK) with the kind support of dietitians and related health and care professionals. At the time of publication the information contained within the resource was, to the best of our knowledge, correct and up-to-date. Always consult a suitably qualified dietitian and/or your GP on health problems. NDR-UK cannot be held responsible for how clients/patients interpret and use the information within this resource. Visit www.ndr-uk.org for more information and to contact the team on the development and evidence supporting this resource.

